

Abstract. *To a large degree, organizations strive for marketing and selling themselves as good employers. However, by a wide range of actions, practices, mistakes, and premises they can most notably demotivate rather than motivate their workforces. On the face of it, this paper proposes a conceptual framework where (1) internal demarketing (ID) is regarded as a sort of corporate illness that is (2) closely associated with high and middle managers' actions, decisions, and behaviors that (3) are capable of triggering negative perceptions at work settings that (4) can potentially lead to the decrease of productivity and/or poor organizational performance. Thus, some constructs are posited as determinants of ID manifestation such as psychological contract violation, people devaluing, quality of work life unconcern, poor leadership, blurred vision, the spread of distrust, and lack of corporate communication. Also, the potential consequences of ID are addressed, namely the lack of commitment, employee dissatisfaction, and employee silence.*

Keywords: distrust, internal customers, internal marketing, organizations, vision.

INTERNAL DEMARKETING: CONSTRUCT, RESEARCH PROPOSITIONS AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

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1. Introduction

In large measure, the corporate life has not been a benign experience. In fact, a considerable amount of organizations (i.e., corporation leaders) tend to disregard the impact of their decisions and attitudes may cause on their employees (Frost, 2003). No rare, they generate feelings of angry, frustration, grievance, and distrust, among others, that may contribute to a potentially detrimental effect on the general organizational performance. In a related vein, several management tools have been developed to help managers to deal with those disruptive signals within corporations and internal marketing (IM) is one of them. According to Ahmed and Rafiq (2003), IM works toward both (1) building a kind of atmosphere and environment wherein workers are compelled to deliver their best efforts to the organization and (2) “establishing, developing, and maintaining successful reciprocal exchange relationships within the organization through: understanding and intimacy; trust; and commitment” (p. 1181).

It is worth highlighting that the issue of exchange within the IM concept was noted by George (1990). Ideally, if one regards that all organizations need that their employees perform well in the task of, for example, dealing with customers, the counterpart is also indispensable. That is, employees also need that their firms strive to motivate them toward this goal. Put another way, it is a managerial work to strike a balance between these two sides wants. However, concerning the employee needs (the internal customer), Kotler (1997) wisely pointed out that IM should precede the external marketing effort. In this sense, Higgins (1996, p. 480) argued that the IM concept offers an insightful framework that can encompass *labor and management* enabling an organizational climate of trust.

Under such a view, the employee-employer relationship is seen as a service transaction. However, Dunne and Barnes (2000) provide a theoretical development by positing that the IM concept can be theorized as the set of benefits (value) that organizations deliver to employees. Therein lies a perspective - within HR frame or not - that focuses primarily on benefiting the employees. Overall, the premise is that this effort will also benefit the firm and clients likewise. On the face of it, IM can be regarded “...as the process of initiating, maintaining, and developing the relationships between employees, their management, and the organization, for the purposes of creating superior value for customers”, as suggested by Bell, Mengüç, and Stefani (2004, p. 113). Similarly, Ahmed and Rafiq (2003, p. 1180) argue that IM is a kind of interaction process between the organization and its employees that is influenced by a given context.

Although the widespread body of the literature covering such theme, there is no evidence that IM, as a managerial tool, is utterly understood and/or rightly practiced by the majority of the organizations (Rafiq, Ahmed, 2000). Therefore, the core argument here is that organizations, by a wide range of actions, practices, mistakes, and premises, can most notably *demotivate* rather than motivate their workforces, even when they are implementing supposedly well-designed IM

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strategies. Put differently, we suggest that misconceived managerial actions toward motivating and engaging employees, *management omissions or inertia*, as well as the lack of or even weak IM policies (potentially conducive to backfire effects) can engender undesirable perceptions among workers. Interestingly, IM researchers and even organizational theorists have not been explored those conundrums, but in this gap lies a fruitful stream of research that is worth of investigation. Rather, we believe that such a biased and/or dysfunctional corporate behavior may be explored, to some degree, by a demarketing-related approach. In its common sense, demarketing has been seen as an intended marketing strategy toward reducing or even eliminating the wants of customers toward a product and/or service (e.g., Kotler, 1997; Shiu, Hassan, Walsh, 2009).

Accordingly, this paper will strive to build upon such an idea, but under a different approach whereby we term the framework earlier described as *internal demarketing* (ID). In effect, it is suggested that ID can represent a countervailing force against - perhaps even greater - IM concept orientation. Viewed in this light, it also depicts a conceptual framework whereby ID and its potential manifestations are discussed. At this juncture, it is important to emphasize that we define ID *as the set of managerial actions, decisions, and behaviors – either consciously or unconsciously implemented – that are capable of triggering perceptions of frustration, disappointment, and dissatisfaction at work settings and that can potentially lead to the decrease of employee productivity and organizational performance*. In its broadest sense, ID may be result of an organizational dysfunction and/or a sort of *corporate illness* that may engender employee dissatisfaction, distrust, and lack of commitment. As a consequence, we conjecture that ID yields poor performance as well (see Figure 1).

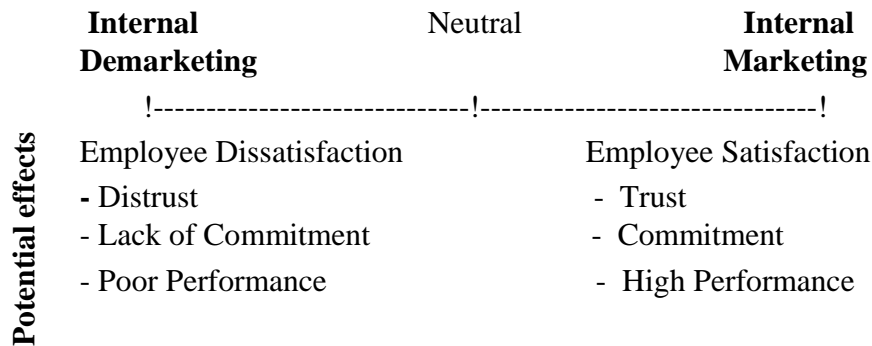


Figure 1. A Continuum Illustrating the Potential Effects of Internal Demarketing

In addition, we postulate that ID spectrum can be more noticeable in workplaces than IM actions effectiveness. Metaphorically speaking, the majority of organizations tend to exhibit serious, but curable illness. Nonetheless, these illnesses are very often not correctly diagnosed, nor clearly identified by executives and

managers. In this sense, business literature presents classic examples of such a framework. Relatedly, Sales (2006) remarks that the bottoms are commonly sidelined from decision making processes, even when the decisions affect their own lives. Tops, for their part, tend to be highly involved with the power, salary, and title, to name a few concerns. Finally, middle managers perform their roles within their specialized silos. Further, they are generally dispersed from their peers and spend their energies and work lives dealing with the formers and other stakeholders. Despite of it, the more acute onlooker is able to perceive ID traces, contours, and negative impacts on organizational environments. Moreover, in varied business contexts, the signals of organizational dysfunctions (diseases) seem to mushroom. On the face of it, the purpose of this paper is to contribute to the understanding of how ID symptoms may be noted on organizational settings, as well as to propose several constructs that are potentially conducive to its manifestation. In order to achieve that goal, the ID concept will be outlined in the following section. Immediately afterwards, it explores the ID antecedents, consequences, and effects by means of a conceptual model. Lastly, implications and future research are suggested.

2. Mapping out the concept of the Internal Demarketing (ID)

To a large degree, organizations strive for marketing and selling themselves as good employers. Further, companies are supposed to be able to provide exciting job opportunities, enduring careers, outstanding infrastructure, strong leadership, compelling businesses vision and mission, and so on. Job seekers, in turn, tend to be more attracted to accept job opportunities where they can be associated with strong brands and build a powerful résumé (Delvechio, Jarkis, Klink, Dineen, 2007). As such, “Most people enter a new organization and job with enthusiasm, eager to work, to contribute, to feel proud of their work and their organizations. Perversely, many managers then appear to do their best to *demotivate* employees!” (Sirota, Mischkind, Meltzer, 2005, p. 15, emphasis added). Similarly, Drake, Gulman, and Roberts (2005) point out that there are plenty of organizations that seem to be some talent for turning enthusiastic employees into sceptical. As a result, this sort of *organizational pathology* tends to undermine important organizational aspects such as strategic plans, organizational climate, employee morale, among other things. Bearing this framework in mind, we suggest that ID can be noted through the failures of organizations in dealing with their employee needs, dreams, values, expectations, and wants. Such shortcomings may often be derived from their IM policies that are not completely aligned with the promises that have been made – being them tacit or explicit ones - to their workforce. Again, we do not deny that ID manifestations may be somewhat attributed to the lack of or poorly developed IM policies.

However, those assumptions do not preclude ID existence nor lessen its importance as a potentially fruitful stream of research. Moreover, there has been widespread acceptance toward addressing some management concepts in a distinctive way such as marketing and demarketing, customer satisfaction and customer

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dissatisfaction, job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction (Weiss, Brief, 2004), eustress and distress (Edwards, Cooper, 1988, as cited in Simmons, Nelson, 2007), employee happiness and employee unhappiness in the workplace and so on. These dichotomies expand, to a large extent, the scientific knowledge frontiers opening up new opportunities for further theoretical advancements. Simply put, labelling ID just as a lack of IM strategies would be, in our view, a narrower perception of a sort of organizational ambiguity or misdiagnosis. In doing so, one would have an unsuitable oversimplification of the complex reality of today's organizations. Thus, it stands to reason to distinguish the IM and ID concepts taking into account that they are different constructs as one intends to show here, yet they are closely intertwined. As noted earlier, we are more interested in broaching the ID concept nuances and effects. In addition, by contrasting both theories one can contribute to deepen the understanding of a so sensitive issue (i.e., employee demotivation) still present at many work settings. We realize that much longer before the IM tools be proposed and developed, ID framework was likely ingrained inside organizations and there is substantial evidence that it still persists inside them.

In contrast, if IM strategies - or whatever the denomination one chooses - are not well designed and implemented toward getting employees involvement, engagement, and commitment to the corporations' goals, they might trigger unwanted perceptions. Consequently, it is not uncommon, for example, to hear workers talking in the leisure spaces of a company referring to a salary increase in a very disgusting manner or even complaining about the lack of respect for them. Furthermore, several dilbertian stories are also permeated by ID symptoms. Again, we conceptualize ID, metaphorically speaking, as a dire ill that springs in the workplaces generated by inadequate corporate decision derived from management misperceptions, wrong premises-based, misjudgments or misbehaviors. Admittedly, when such things are identified within the workplaces, organizations are by means of their acts, practices, strategies, and behaviors "unselling" themselves to their internal customers. By the same token, companies no rare decrease the enthusiasm, affect, and alignment of their employees on their purposes and causing, by extension, some sort of organizational dysfunction. We argue that nothing could be more dangerous to a company future than producing these kinds of perceptions at work settings. Obviously, IM can be employed to diminish ID manifestations. Rather, IM is usually undertaken by managers to attain specific internal goals, whereas ID is, in a broader view, the upshot of several organizational anomalies that emerge in the workplaces. We posit that such problems are either mismanaged or even neglected by managers, even though they are trying to put into practice IM actions. Importantly, under this framework one would be reasonable to expect decreased employees morale and attachment to their employer.

Focusing on the potential remedy (e.g., effective IM policies), it is worth remembering that many firms have not fully understood – as suggested by IM theory – that employees as a whole constitute either their first market (Ewing, Caruana, 1999; Grönroos, 1993) or their internal market (e.g., Halal, 2000; Hooley, Saunders, Piercy, 2001) or their internal customers (Berry, 1981; Greene, Walls, Shrest, 1994; Sargent,

Asif, 1998). Most importantly, employees are and will likely continue to be of paramount importance to well-intentioned organizations initiatives toward serving the external customers in a very effective manner. Furthermore, all those approaches place workers at the center of organizations survival and success. Despite this commonplace, firms very often forget these undoubtedly truths. Although there is a shortage of empirical inquiries, the general perception is that few corporations are really able to consider jobs as internal products, as well as are truly engaged in – just as external marketing does – designing these products to meet their internal customer needs in a more positive way (e.g., Foreman, Money, 1995; Kelemen, Papasolomou-Doukakis, 2004). Admittedly, such procedures are easier to be said than done.

Scholars like Tansuhaj, Randall, and McCullough (1991) suggested that the application of the IM concept could be translated into positive employee attitudes towards their work, including organizational commitment, job involvement, work motivation, and job satisfaction. Paradoxically, it appears that firms are deliberately decreasing the motivation of their employees, regarding the organizational ambiguities, managerial weaknesses, and growing economic pressures that currently permeate business arenas. In the aftermath, workers have been routinely treated worldwide just as disposable raw materials, as well as have enjoyed an unsatisfactory work life (e.g., East, 2005; Fry, Cohen, 2009; Twenge, Campbell, 2008). Under such circumstances, employees tend to be disenchanted, demotivated, and even betrayed by the organizations they work for. Overall, this outcome can clearly contribute to shape an ID framework.

Meanwhile, IM researchers have basically theorized about three closely intertwined streams of development of the IM concept, namely, the employee satisfaction, the customer orientation, and the strategy implementation and change management phase (Ahmed, Rafiq, 2002). Nevertheless, the most crucial phase - the one in which employee satisfaction is more emphasized - has not been completely embraced by organizations, yet theoretical advancement toward building happiness in the workplace was ever proposed (e.g., Vasconcelos, 2008). This imperative is no rare managed as a perfunctory organizational discourse. In fact, many corporate mission, value statements, and corporate advertisings that are usually exhibited at firms' sites, TV channels, journals, and magazines echo an inaccurate organization image. After all, if things were different, one would have only great firms to work for, but evidence clearly shows that it is not the case. In sum, organizations usually undermine employees' job satisfaction and motivation by means of an ID frame, as one intends to argue here. In other words, instead of building the commitment of employees to organizational goals, companies simply weaken the bounds between them and their workers. Therefore, having knowledge and control over the salient signals of employee dissatisfaction are essential to maintain a healthy organizational climate and the profitability of the organization.

3. The antecedents

Today's business environments, one can note organizations pertaining to distinct business sectors failing in delivering their promises to both customers and employees. As a consequence, the damage can be translated in terms of loss of customer loyalty, market share, image reputation, and profitability, among other things. These outcomes could be likely reversible if an organization admitted its wrongdoings or flaws, that is, if managers – supported by the performance of workers – strived to fix the things. With regard to the employees, the damage can be more complex and overwhelming to the survival of companies, especially whether the human capital decides to go away taking its knowledge and skills to another place. Moreover, the process of replacing talents can be very difficult even unfeasible depending on the circumstances. In fact, it is easier to disengage than engage employees in terms of achieving organizational goals. We consider that ID is a multidimensional construct given that the deficient interactions between organizations and workers can occur through different ways and circumstances. Accordingly, we intend to cover just some salient variables that might negatively leverage employees' perception and prompt to shape an ID scenario (see Figure 2) likewise.

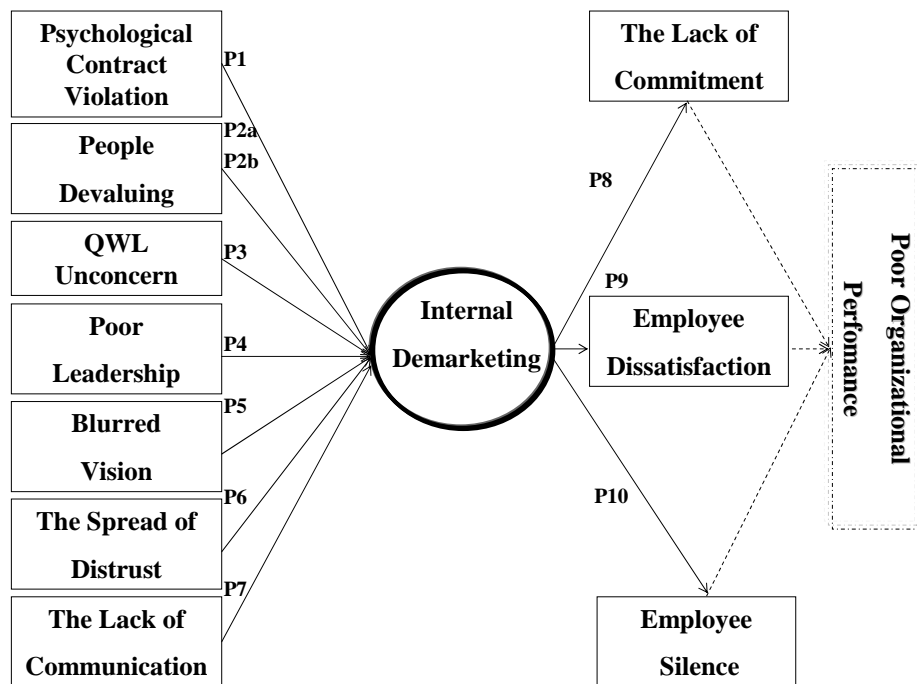


Figure 2. Internal Demarketing Model

Overall, the mismanagement of those dimensions might impair the relationship between employees and employers. On the face of it, we predict that, in the long run, there can be a negative impact on organizational performance. Taken as whole, those constructs can be operationalized in order to measure the ID first-order construct. Additionally, we are also pleased to start a discussion by establishing (whenever it is possible) some contrasts between IM and ID about a so burning issue that affects many people work lives. Therefore, this section presents the major variables that are potentially conducive to shape an ID frame. However, it is reasonable to expect that some constructs that permeate the corporate life have a substantial impact on elaborating ID concept, especially those related to devaluing and disrespecting employees by putting them on secondary roles, despite the fact they are commonly regarded as firms' first market or customers.

3.1. Psychological contract violation

The psychological contract is regarded as a vital component underlying the relationship between workers and organizations given that it engenders "... a belief in an obligation of reciprocity between an employee and an organization", as posited by Rousseau (1989, cited in Andersson, 1996, p. 1402). However, the psychological contract between employers and employees tend to be torn up at any signal of disturbance on contemporary chaotic and increasingly unstable work environments where people spend great part of their lives. In fact, companies have argued against the possibility to keep the jobs forever and such a position has created fear and insecurity in the minds of many employees.

In doing so, organizations undermine the psychological contract that implicitly works like a powerful determinant of their behavior (Shein, as cited in Robbins, 2002, p. 222). Workers, in turn, in such situations tend to judge that firms are violating the aforementioned contract. It is worth remembering that violation, as defined by Morrison and Robinson (1997, p. 242), brings about "an effective and emotional experience of disappointment, frustration, anger, and resentment that may emanate from an employee's interpretation of a contract breach and its accompanying circumstances." Worst still, there are substantial evidence of violations and betrayals of trust permeating organizational environments (Elangovan, Shapiro, 1998). In this regard, Turnley and Feldman's findings (2000) show that psychological contract violations are likely to have a pervasive negative impact on employee attitudes and behaviors, including increased neglect of in-role job duties, reduced willingness to engage in voluntary behaviors supportive of the organization, and increased attempts to leave the organization altogether. Further, they found that the negative consequences of psychological contract may result in behaviors that are damaging to organizational effectiveness as well.

Admittedly, smart firms may do something to remedy it. For example, Morrison and Robinson (1997) suggested that the potential feelings of anger and betrayal might be reduced whether companies would offset the negative perceptions

derived from the breach of contract by offering honest and adequate explanations to the employees as to why such thing took place. Conceivably, we argue that many violations take place without any organization official statement or managerial communication. Taken together, it might trigger a negative organizational climate in the work environments. Hence, we propose as follows:

Proposition 1: When an organization practices some sort of psychological contract violation, it can be leading to ID occurrence in organizational settings.

3.2. People devaluing

Under the traditional IM way of thinking, when a company is caring for their employees, it is regarded as a foundation for employees caring for customers (McKee, 2003). Some management thinkers go beyond this reasoning by asserting that customers come second (see, for example, Rosenbluth, Peters, 1992). Taken together, what all these approaches have in common is that they place employees in a perspective of value component that should be treated as a key variable in order to assure the organizational well-functioning. As stated by Ahmed and Rafiq (2003, p. 1182), "IM places people centre stage in the equation of the organisational success." Put differently, when firms meet the needs of employees, the IM policies tend to be construed by employees (i.e., the internal market) that they are, in fact, valued by their organizations. Judd (2003) argues that employees are placed as the most important asset in the majority of corporation statements, given that every employee, in terms of value chain, cooperates in the process of creating customer value. In this sense, managers should take that seriously placing their people really in first place (Pfeffer, Veiga, 1999).

Pfeffer (1994, p. 10) wisely noted that people and the way they are managed are very important because other sources of competitive success are less powerful than they once were. In his view, the differentiating factors are: (1) organizations, (2) its workers, and (3) how they work. Based on this line of reasoning, Lawler (2003, p. 12) has posited that expressive outcomes could be obtained only by means of talented people as well as well-designed organizations operating with the best management systems.

Despite the platitude of employees as the most valuable asset, what has prevailed is the inability of most corporations in handling with this resource (see, e.g., East, 2005; Garcia-Zamor, 2003; Gross-Schaefer, 2009). More specifically, many companies do not behave as whether their people were indeed the number one priority (Lawler, 2003). On the contrary, there is growing evidence that organizations worldwide do not treat their employees as customers. In doing so, they engender the perception that employees have little value or constitute just a disposable asset to them, as said earlier. In our view, such a notion may prompt to ID manifestation. Based on it, we propose:

Proposition 2a: Weak signals of employee valuing can lead to ID occurrence in organizational settings.

Stated differently, we also propose:

Proposition 2b: Strong signals of employee devaluing can lead to ID occurrence in organizational settings.

3.3. Quality of working life (QWL) unconcern

QWL has been defined as “employee’s satisfaction of various needs through resources, activities, and outcomes stemming from participation in the workplace” (Lee, Sirgy, Efraty, and Siegel (2003, p. 211). QWL construct can fit into the model regarding that the lack of it indicates that the organization is unconcerned with the work-life balance issue. Ideally, organizational actions should preserve the quality of life of employees both inside and outside the workplace (Luthans, Youssef, 2004). In fact, a convincing demonstration of that concerning would be, for example, to carry out consistent policies toward avoiding the lack of respect on their personal time. Yet, it seems that it is not the extant pattern.

Indeed, the majority of corporate leaders do not appear to be truly interested in employee QWL. Actually, it seems that they somehow enjoy imposing a frenetic rhythm of work. In fact, they have huge responsibilities toward generating stress at work because of their unhealthy behavior. Therefore, whether QWL has not been appropriately integrated into organizational life, it should be partly attributed to corporate leaders that have not suitably dealt with their corporate social responsibility duties in relation to the well-being of employees (Vasconcelos, 2001).

Lee, Sirgy, Efraty, and Siegel (2003, p. 210) suggest that QWL affects not only job satisfaction but also satisfaction with other domains, namely family life, leisure life, social life, financial life, and so on. On the whole, organizational policies geared toward keeping worker health, well-being, and happiness in the workplace can potentially yield positive impact on business likewise (e.g., Luthans, Youssef, 2004). Despite of it, QWL seems not to be one of the organizations priorities.

In this regard, it is important to point out, for instance, a survey conducted in Brazil with 25,000 managers between 30 and 75 years of age – and there is no plausible reason to believe that such findings be substantially different in others parts of the world - found that 80% of the sample kept unhealthy nutrition habits; 70% were under high levels of stress; 65% followed a sedentary lifestyle; 60% were overweight; 50% drank regularly; 40% were smokers; 26% suffered from some kind of skin disease; 25% had high levels of cholesterol; 19% suffered from hypertension; 16% had ulcer disease; and 15% were feeling fatigue (Dieguez, 2004). Thus, we suggest that one of the more consistent ways of ID manifestation in organizational environments is related to neglect of employee health.

In addition, we believe that most organizations are failing in caring for health and work-life balance aspirations of their internal partners. Seemingly, what it has prevailed is the growing pressures for quickest results in a daily basis. In this sort of

organizational landscape, employee well-being and health are being lagged behind. Thus, we offer the following proposition:

Proposition 3: Strong signals of QWL unconcern lead to ID occurrence in organizational settings.

3.4. Poor leadership

Managers always play a key role to the success of organizations. In today's work settings, one could assert that companies want that their managers be and behave as leaders. Perhaps it explains the fact these professionals are very often labeled as if they were leaders. According to Buckingham and Coffman (1999), from the point of view of workers, managers are more influential than the company. Findings of these researchers highlighted that managers are crucial to the work lives of employees, instead of pay, benefits, perks, and charismatic corporate leaders. In addition, managers are essential in building strong workplaces where employees can reach their goals as well (Lawler, 2003).

Accordingly, Lawler (2003, p. 89) also posits that managers are directly responsible for their subordinates' satisfaction at work. In addition, the behavior of managers is determinant to workers remain or not in an organization. Overall, it is clear that managers hold substantial power in work environments. As such, they can contribute either to the happiness or unhappiness of their internal customers. Blanchard (as cited in Danna and Griffin, 1999, p. 374) noted that a bad boss has the power to make "people sick by subjecting them to unnecessary stress by behaving unpredictably, eroding workers' sense of self-confidence and well-worth, placing workers in win-lose situations, or providing too much or too little stimulation."

Lubit (2004) goes even further by arguing that "Toxic managers dot the landscape in most organizations, making them seem, at times, like war zones. These managers can complicate your work, drain your energy, compromise your sanity, derail your projects and destroy your career [...]" (p. 1). Nonetheless, organizations need – likely more than ever before – workers' best efforts and gifts in order to become perennial enterprises. Apparently, employees will do it whether practices of leadership do measure up to their expectations (Moxley, 2000). On the other hand, IM knowledge has advanced to a degree that one can pinpoint failures in the performance of leadership by means of internal research (Ahmed, Rafiq, 2002). Otherwise, managers and organizational leaders counter to IM philosophy or not trained in such tenets can wreck internal relationships, employees' motivation, and general organizational performance. This frame gives rise to the proposition as follows:

Proposition 4: Poor leadership leads to ID occurrence in organizational settings.

3.5. Blurred vision

Other crucial issue that is related to both leadership and ID proliferation in work environments has to do with an unclear corporate vision. In fact, research indicates that employees hunger for managers (i.e., leaders) who focus on human capital not their own egos (Lawler, 2003, p. 206). Thus, executives like, for example, Carly Fiorina (former HP's CEO) tend to be no more wanted in organizational settings. Indeed, such corporate leaders generally own an ego bigger than the size of corporations they are running. Very often, they build not a vision, but a nightmare for their organizations and subordinates (see, for example, Johnson, 2008). Accordingly, it is amazing the storms that a CEO can yield to his/her organization and its stakeholders. In contrast, a so-called transformational leader is concerned with his/her ability to make the organization adopt a shared vision (Carrilat, Jaramillo, Locander, 2004). As Senge (1998) pointed out, such initiative has the power of integrating people around common interests and perceptions. Yet it requires a kind of leadership transparency that enhances perceptions of authenticity, by enabling leaders to use suitable tools that take them to guide their units to achieve their targets and goals (Luthans, Youssef, 2004, p. 150).

On the other hand, IM approach has been highly beneficial in shaping corporate vision. Rather, it has been suggested that a successful IM must provide employees with a clear vision that it is worth pursuing. Admittedly, it must be communicated with passion by organizations (Berry, Parasuraman, 2000; Czaplewski, Ferguson, Milliman, 2001, p. 15). To Czaplewski, Ferguson, and Milliman (2001) employees feel more comfortable in knowing that their work fits into the broader frame of a business, as well as understanding and believing in the goal that the organization set to them to pursue. Nevertheless, evidence shows that many organizations have faced great difficulty to understand the value of having their employees sharing a common goal or vision of their futures. Thomson and Hecker (2000, p. 166) surmises that it derives from the management process of decision making in which the vision is spread out like a "top-down edict". As a consequence, this procedure usually does not cover or satisfy the interests, needs, and concerns of the employees. In addition, such way of "selling" corporate vision is detrimental to employees' job satisfaction and to the future of organization. Based on this line of reasoning, we suggest the following:

Proposition 5: Blurred visions in which concerns about employees are not appropriately addressed and managed by corporate leaders can lead to ID occurrence in organizational settings.

3.6. The spread of distrust

Another important construct that leverages employee commitment to organizations is trust. As posited by McEvily, Perrone, and Zaheer, (2003, p. 99), “Without trust, the uncertainty that pervades the organization and coordination of economic activity would be debilitating. Although trust is not the only solution to the organization of work, trust can generate efficiencies by conserving cognitive resources, lowering transaction costs, and simplifying decision making (...).” All managers should already know that it is very hard to conquer, but very easy to lose. In contrast, distrust in corporate environments is generally the upshot of undelivered promises. This perception usually takes place when people feel betrayed. As a result, the feeling of anger is likely to go up and the engagement goes down. Moreover, the ties between workers and managers (or organizations) tend to be weakened as well. Therefore, taken as whole, the perception of distrust undermines the organizational functioning; in addition, we suggest that it heavily contributes to build an ID frame.

Levering (1997) contended that, on the one hand, trust works like a coin of relationships in the good work environments but, on the other hand, the lack of trust makes the workplace easily dehumanized. This researcher has proposed that the ongoing replenishment of trust reserves is the most salient characteristic of the outstanding workplaces whereby employees recognize that their company respect and are concerned with them. As for this study purposes, we are aligned with Ahmed and Rafiq (2003), especially when they propose: “IM is built on ‘trust’” (p. 1182). In their view, if organizations (i.e., managers and corporate leaders) deliver on their promises, they urge employees to be involved in the pursuing of higher quality standards of performance that must be embedded in the entire supply-chain process. They also posit that a desired aligning is obtained through systematic and explicit considerations to all stakeholders needs (including employees). Moreover, it is a kind of task in which IM can help by furthering and enhancing both trust and commitment among all parties.

Hitt and Ireland (2002), in turn, remark that strategic leaders – that is, the intelligent ones – must build effective relationships with the members of the group as an efficient mechanism to create a culture of trust among all. Broadly speaking, we think that such a proposition fits perfectly into both the macro and micro levels of organizational relationships. To a larger degree, organizational shortcomings, undelivered promises, the unmet needs of employees, and the implementation of change management programs, among other things, should be managed to build – under the IM framework – a more open dialogue and transparency between workers and employers in order to avoid the perception of distrust in the minds of employees. Overall, these considerations suggest that the construct of distrust decreases the likelihood of corporations keep good performance. As such, it prompts us to the following proposition:

Proposition 6: The perception of distrust in the workplaces leads to ID occurrence.

3.7. The lack of communication

The topic of internal communication is a key ingredient to get people engaged in organizational goals. It will be unwise to force workers to attain and enliven company mission when they are not kept abreast about the strategies that are being implemented, the business scenario, the competitors' counter-attacks, customers' perceptions, and the organization current setbacks, among other things. As neatly suggested by Drake, Gulman, and Roberts (2005, p. 53) employees are, broadly speaking, the companies' body needing proper nourishment. In a related vein, drawing upon a military parlance Kotter (2006, p. 246) notes: "Without credible communication, and a lot of it the hearts and minds of the troops are never captured." In other words, employees need plenty of good communication through a wide variety of channels.

Research has emphasized different aspects of this construct (e.g., Ahmed, Rafiq, 2003; Cahill, 1996; Dutton, 2003; Gilly, Wolfinbarger, 1998; Hogg, Carter, 2000; Luthans, Youssef, 2004; Naudé, Desai, Murphy, 2003; Taylor, Cosenza, 1998; Varey, 1995). Overall, organizations need to be accurate, timely, and fast in their process of communication with their internal audience. In this light, Sirota, Mischkind, & Meltzer (2005) found that "[...] Employees' frustration with a lack of communication is one of the most frequent comments we encounter in focus groups and in write-in comments [...]" (p. 132). Not surprisingly workers are always eager to know about what is taking place with their work environments as well as things that can affect their careers or well-beings.

Furthermore, Luthans and Youssef (2004) wisely remark: "[...] Open communication becomes a key to the development of trust. Clearly communicated organizational vision and objectives ensure consistency and allow for best practices such as participation and involvement to materialize [...]" (p. 150). However, if one intends that communications be effective it must function in a two-way manner. Also of noteworthy is that a well-designed and, more importantly, well-implemented internal communication plan helps the organizations avoid spreading gossips, fear, and even panic inside their structures. On the face of it, we suggest that the poor or even the lack of organizational communication generates a highly undesirable perception within organizational settings. Hence, we propose the following:

Proposition 7: The lack of appropriate communication inside organizations is conducive to ID occurrence.

4. Potential consequences of the Internal Demarketing

Thus far, our conceptual model has focused on some critical variables that could be potentially conducive to ID manifestation. As previously highlighted, ID may have important consequences to both employees work lives and organizations performance. Therefore, it would be wise to examine the possible impacts. Thus, we intend to explore some of them in the topics ahead.

4.1. The lack of commitment

Thus, we start with the construct of commitment given that it is closely linked with the construct of trust (Ahmed, Rafiq, 2002). Getting commitment from employees is believed to be of paramount importance to achieve organizational goals. Indeed, it is unconceivable to expect that one's is committed to an organization that one does not trust at all. In a related vein, Chalofisky and Krishina (2009) notes, "[...] Organizations that want to foster affective commitment must in turn show their commitment to the employees by providing supportive work environments [...]."

Vasconcelos (2004) ponders that the intelligent organizations have already realized that workers are, indeed, their main asset. Actually, firms that really deserve that label, in exchange to getting the participation, involvement, and commitment of their employees, strive to care about them. Nonetheless, in times of financial crisis, organizational change, and mergers, organizations tend, in turn, to show no commitment to the needs of employees. Admittedly, these scenarios may likely result in framing ID. On the other hand, we are aligned with Senge (1998) when he considers that the true commitment is scarce on today's organizations. Rather, what it is usually identifiable is just a top-down decision-making system whereby employees *should buy a vision* and be fully committed to it. Surely, it is not a new conclusion given that this way of doing things has been largely employed. However, Grönroos (1994, p. 14) posited, "What is new is the active, market-oriented approach as suggested by the internal marketing concept."

Similarly, Tansuhaj, Randall, and McCullough (1991) emphasized that one of the important consequences of IM is to increase the employees' organizational commitment. We think that it is better explained by regarding it as an IM goal and one of the measures of this process is the level of organizational identification whereby one may gauge how employees see themselves as part of the organization (Dutton, Dukerich, Harquail, 1994). In fact, we think that it is essential to maintain and assure the future of the companies. Nonetheless, the growing number of employees demonstrating job dissatisfaction denotes the weakening of relationship and commitment between them and their employers (Rosenburg, Mano, 2003). This tends to foster the disengagement of employees in companies operations and future. Taking it into account, George (1998, p. 25) noted that "Negative engagement denotes a sense of anxious, stressful, and negative involvement in work activities". All those elements conspire against the well-being of employees and IM well-functioning. Based on such assumptions, we suggest the following:

Proposition 8: The lack of employee commitment to organization is the result of ID occurrence in organizational settings.

4.2. Employee dissatisfaction

Firstly, it is worth remembering that job satisfaction also impacts life satisfaction (Locke, 1976; Myers, 1993). Secondly, this empirical evidence should require more attention from the companies; nonetheless, the signs indicate that they usually prefer to pursue another direction. In effect, it has been argued that job satisfaction is derived from the feeling of attainment of values that satisfy one's needs (Locke, 1976). Following a similar line of reasoning, Staw, Sutton, and Pelled (1994, p. 66) remarked: "When one adopts the employee's perspective on performance evaluations, job satisfaction is transformed from a source of unwanted measurement error to a way of getting ahead at work." In addition, the belief in the satisfaction of employees is believed to be the primary reason (Schneider, as cited in Hartline, Ferrel, 1996) or the best way to provide better service to the customers, that is, both internal and external ones (Lings, 1999). Considering that the survival of organizations heavily relies on the good quality of their services and products, the satisfaction of employees (i.e., the guardians of these outputs) should be prioritized instead of disdained. With reference to that point, Lee, Sirgy, Efraty, and Siegel (2003) argue that managers could help by ensuring a more collegial and supportive workplace. At the same time, managers could also make compelling efforts to satisfy the lower needs of employees. This suggests a kind of concerning that constitutes, based on IM concept, an authentic way to put employees in the first place.

Nevertheless, there are strong evidences indicating that such a mindset is underestimated or even considered irrelevant by companies and therein lies a great paradox. After all, the discourses and practices are not convergent. In fact, it has been convincingly pointed out that the more satisfaction individuals obtain from a job, the better they are expected to feel about the general aspects of an organization (Naudé, Desai, Murphy, 2003). We surmise that the similar reasoning might be elicited from the job dissatisfaction perception. In a related vein, Argyle (1994) argued that low job satisfaction is closely linked with high rates of anxiety, depression, psychosomatic, and coronary heart disease.

Thus, one of the major challenges of the contemporary organizations is to rule out the aspects, dimensions, and variables that can eventually trigger the perception of job dissatisfaction among employees. Moreover, if organizations did it, they would clearly demonstrate that they matter with their internal customers' well-being, especially after the plethora of downsizings and mergers that have been put into practice in the last decades. Otherwise, one could generate a clear perception of ID manifestation in the work environment whereby employees could feel devalued. As such, it gives rise to the following proposition:

Proposition 9: Employee job dissatisfaction is the result of ID occurrence in organizational settings.

4.3. Employee silence

Lastly, our framework also embraces the construct of employee silence as another potential negative consequence derived from ID. Indeed, we surmise that employees seldom feel encouraged to voice their dissatisfactions at work utterly. Obviously, many things contribute to this demeanor and, in this regard, at least three aspects can be explored. First, employees may think that it is not worth saying anything because nothing will be changed. Therefore, it could clearly indicate a lack of trust on organizational leaderships' initiatives in solving the extant problems. Second, employees could construe that the corporate climate is not favorable to word any kind of criticism or suggestion. Such a view could denote a fear of being misunderstood and/or retaliated against. Third, simply put, employees' silence could be a way of protest or disengagement.

Thus, employees working under this climate could see no remedy for the current situation as a whole, and, as a consequence, they could just be waiting for the best moment to fly away. According to Morrison and Milliken (2000, p. 707), the organizational silence could be a very dangerous obstacle to organizational change and development, as well as to the development of authentic pluralistic organizations. In effect, whether employees are afraid to openly express what they think about some critical issues, then those goals are unfeasible. Admittedly, the top managers have the authority and power to impose the company-wide structures and policies that contribute to organizational silence (e.g., excessive centralization).

Either way, by disheartening employees willing to express their opinions and feedbacks, they can jeopardize the effectiveness of organizational decision making and change. One real-world example of that organizational dynamic is related to Enron events. Reports suggested that Enron's employees had concerns about the firm's activities but they were afraid to talk about this with their bosses (Milliken, Morrison, Hewlin, 2003). We think that employees' silence must be addressed as an undesirable state that can cripple organizations performance. To some degree, it reveals the presence of, say, a serious internal disturbance that must be managed in a more efficient way. On the face of these arguments, we propose as follows:

Proposition 10: Employee silence is the result of ID occurrence in organizational settings.

5. Managerial implications

Taken together, the variables that were posited, namely, lack of commitment, employee dissatisfaction, and employee silence may likely be devastating to the future of an organization. In other words, employee dissatisfaction can be expressed through different ways, yet, at the case in point, we posit that such a feeling could spill over the employee commitment to organization goals, vision, and strategies as well. As

such, employees are predictably not encouraged to perform creatively, as well as in an engaged manner. Further, how to ask workers to go an extra mile or beyond their customary duties? It is also suggested that employee silence is a potential negative effect derived from the worker dissatisfaction and such a behavior does not pitch in for any kind of organizational ameliorating. Put differently, the employee would most likely not trust on manager and/or organization promises anymore. As a consequence, this conceptual framework also predicts a detrimental effect on organizational performance.

Overall, ID concept can be regarded as the antithesis of the IM concept. While the latter helps to build the pillars of external customer satisfaction by addressing the internal customers' needs first, the former, as was proposed, erodes the well-being of employees and their commitment on the organization purposes engendering the feeling of job dissatisfaction. In fact, we surmise that ID is highly pervasive in the modern workplaces given that there has been a substantial amount of narratives by workers and executives, as well as business magazines articles, emphasizing perceptions of disillusion, disenchantment, and deep disappointment with corporate life (e.g., McKnight, 2005). The common ground among them is the fact that employees are feeling devalued, exploited, sapped, and disrespected on job. Seemingly, we are living in an era where organizational ambiguities and mismanagement are peaking.

Although contemporary companies have all the necessary tools to change the workplaces so as to embrace more positive dynamics, what can be consistently noted is the opposite path (Cooper, 2008; Hayakawa, 2009). The ID concept encompasses, as noted earlier, several corporate disjunctions (diseases) that have mushroomed in today's organizational settings. To some degree, the presence of ID turns the work life into a malign one. Put another way, it tend to drain the employee motivation and eliminates the feeling of happiness at work. We predict that people that are living under ID frame are facing, at a minimum, unpleasant experiences in the workplaces. Furthermore, there are reasons to believe that these disruptions have not been adequately faced by corporate leaders. Rather, we surmise that managers and executives are, in a large measure, the sources of the ID symptoms as our model tried to explore.

6. Directions for future research and conclusions

In the main, future research could peruse how managers and corporate leaders view themselves as potential agents of ID at work settings. Thus, it would be very interesting to investigate the hurdles and difficulties they consider to be deal with in order to decrease the ID manifestations. In contrast, from the perspective of employees (1) one could probe their opinions about their bosses on that role; (2) one could also try to confirm if the constructs that were broached explain the ID

dynamic; (3) and one could scrutinize whether other potential variables such as internal relationships, working groups, internal marketing-mix, among others commonly placed under the terrain of IM actions, could enrich the model that was proposed.

We also envision that a scale could be developed in order to measure out if an organization follows an ID or IM orientation. Such diagnoses could provide the organizational leaders with the issues that should receive more attention from them. To follow it through one could embrace the constructs that were discussed here and other ones that could be regarded relevant for this discussion. Given that the IM concept aims to impact positively external customers, it is supposed that all internal efforts are done in this direction. In other related vein, one could deepen on the ID consequences on the satisfaction of external customers as well. In this way, one could try to identify some organizations that fit on the ID profile and probe how they are perceived by external customers.

Overall, we strived to outline an organizational disruption that is apparently widespread at work settings. Although its general symptoms are well-known, there has not been a suitable conceptualization of this organization disease. As earlier discussed, it is potentially harmful to organization performance and to employees' work lives as well. In this sense, we attempted to shed some light on relevant aspects of organizational life that have been somewhat neglected. We chose to contrast ID with IM concept because it seemed to us the best way to discuss some managerial problems that are not explored by the latter. In doing so, we provided a theoretical contribution to diagnose and determine some important problems that pervade workplaces. As was suggested, ID is clearly associated with organizational malfunctioning. As such, it requires determination, courage, care, and interest to be diminished to a bearable level.

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